



Family to Family Times:

A Quarterly Update on Implementation Activities for Family to Family

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Family to Family Philosophy:

Children are best served in their own homes whenever possible and in their own communities and neighborhoods when they must be removed from their homes.

Family to Family Staff:

Coordinator:

James Anderson
DFCS

408.975.5685

andersji@cws.co.santa-clara.ca.us

Support Coordinator

Dana Koga
DFCS

408.975.5646

kogoda@cws.co.santa-clara.ca.us

Agency Consultant

Dana Bunnett
Kids in Common
408.882.0900x40

bunnettd@aol.com

Thank you to all those that have participated in the early months of the implementation of Team Decision-Making. Your participation has given us the information we need to move forward and expand our Team Decision-Making sessions.

If you have questions or comments about the contents of this newsletter, please contact either Jim Anderson, Dana Koga, or Dana Bunnett. (See contact information listed above.)

County of Santa Clara Social Services Agency

Department of Family and Children's Services

December Focus: Team Decision-Making

Team Decision-Making (TDM) is a facilitated forum for family and community input from which DFCS can make the most informed placement decisions to ensure child safety. The purpose of TDM is to provide a strength-based and family-focused forum for reaching consensus on placement and permanency decisions. Team Decision-Making takes place in a meeting that includes family members, foster parents (if the child is in placement), service providers and other community representatives, the social worker and often the social work supervisor. The meeting is a sharing of information about the family that relates to the protection of the children and the functioning of the family. The goal is to reach consensus about a plan that protects the children and preserves or reunifies the family.

In July, 2003, Santa Clara County DFCS began a "phase-in" of TDM, focusing on cases that are potentially divertable in Central and South County. Since this start, over 55 TDM's have been conducted. It is the goal to eventually expand TDM's to all cases that involve a placement decision (placement changes, unplanned placement changes and permanency) and to develop the capability to involve more community based organizations in the TDM meetings.

Here are some of the comments from social workers who have participated in a TDM, when asked how TDM impacted their work:

- I felt like TDM has helped me as a placement worker to know more info about the case, the history and it helps us an agency to find the most appropriate and safe place for the child if necessary.
- The TDM made me comfortable in the post-removal decision process. A collective decision was made by all involved, including the families. The children were released back to the care of the families with a safety plan in place.
- Timewise it has added to my workload - however, I think the trade-off of having a team make the decision is worth the sacrifice.
- Very helpful. The family calmed down and are now working with Gardner and checking with me as well. Relationship improved with client and me.

Mary Grimm, TDM Workgroup co-Chair states, "TDM has such potential for improving outcomes for children and families. First, it helps us make the best decision for a child when we are considering an initial removal. It also has the potential to preserve placements, by bringing everyone to the table and identifying resource needs. It is far better to preserve a placement than to send a child through multiple placements because a need hasn't been identified."

TDM will eventually be utilized in all decisions regarding placement of the child. Elena Maria Burn, Gale Simmons and Stefanie Nieto will soon come on board as TDM facilitators in the Joint Decision-Making Unit. **A Social Worker can now voluntarily request a TDM**, particularly when considering an initial removal or placement change. **To request a TDM** in North County contact: Marie Araiza at 299-1527 or Mitra Pishdadi at 299-1528. In South County contact, Carmen Carrasco at 846-5053.

